



# Ocean and Coastal Resource Management

## South Carolina

South Carolina owes a lot to its coast. Through its contours and abundant resources, it shaped our past as one of the 13 original colonies and was an early seat of wealth and influence. It has defined who we are today.

Today those same contours and resources that first attracted the early settlers to South Carolina are now drawing millions of tourist to the state, generating billions of dollars of revenue each year.

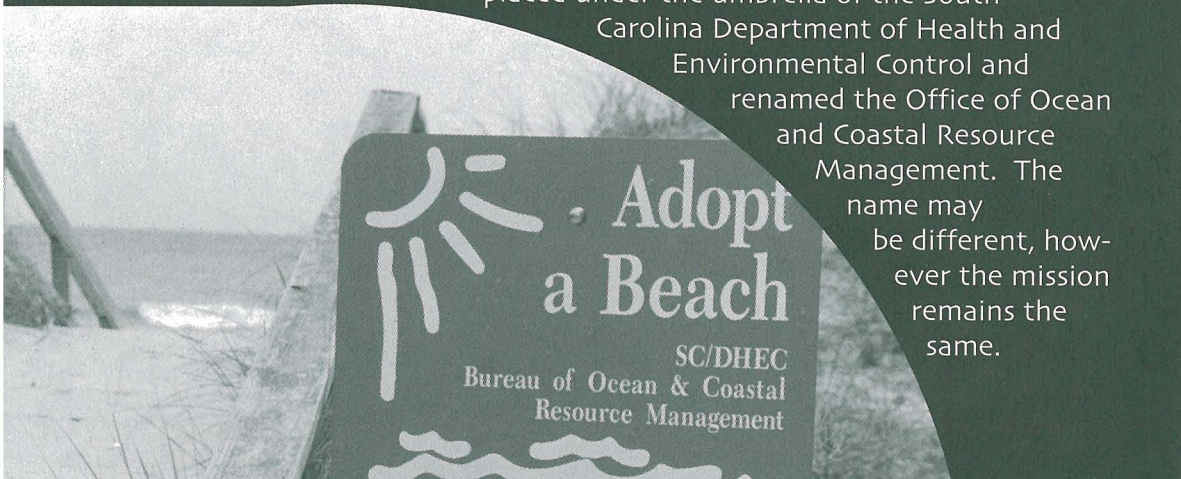
But as financially valuable as our coast has become, its beaches, creeks, rivers and bays are even more valuable as an irreplaceable home for marine life. From fish to birds to shellfish, all of our marine life depends on the 3,000 mile network of waterways and 500,000 acres of salt water marsh. Our salt marsh alone is one of the most productive natural resource areas in the world, generating as much and often more organic matter than the most productive wheat field. But for all its massive size, our tideland area remains a fragile place that can easily be damaged by careless or uncontrolled development.

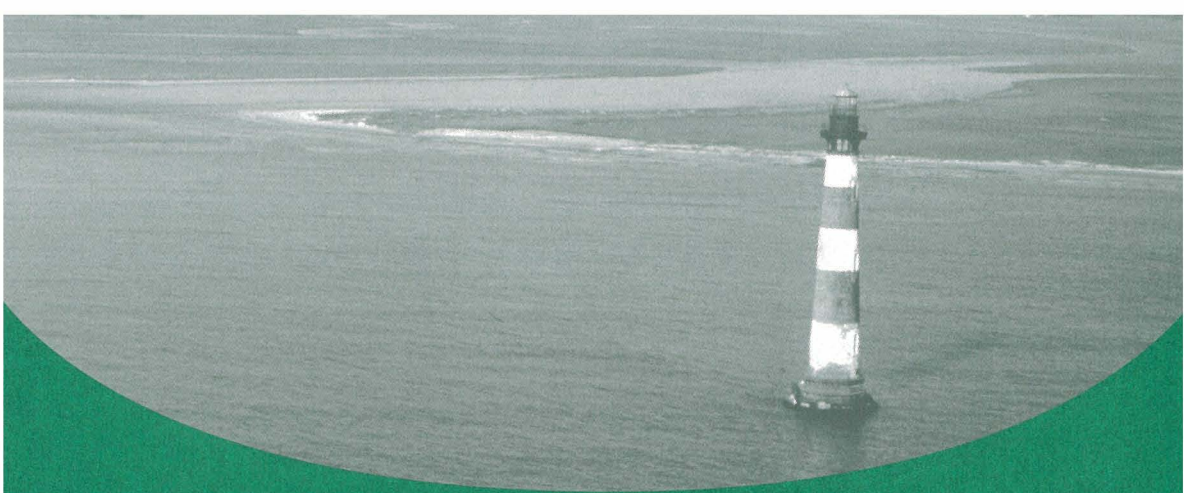
That destruction has already occurred in other states. It is the job of DHEC's Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management to insure that it does not happen here.

## History

The South Carolina General Assembly created the South Carolina Coastal Council in May 1977 as a group charged with a dual responsibility- to protect the coastal environment while promoting responsible development along the coast. Several years later, the Coastal Council was placed under the umbrella of the South

Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control and renamed the Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management. The name may be different, however the mission remains the same.





## Regulatory Division

OCRM's influence stretches across all of South Carolina's eight coastal counties. While that influence comes in many different forms, OCRM's main strength comes through its Regulatory Division. The Regulatory Division is in charge of all permitting and certification in the coastal zone.

### Permitting

OCRM's permitting process applies to anyone whose development plans would alter salt water marsh or the area known as "critical area". Those plans may be as seemingly inconsequential as a boat dock, or as involved as a housing complex or oil refinery. Before any projects begin, OCRM must be approached for a permit. Plans for the permit are placed on public notice, while staff members conduct on-site inspections to determine how much of an impact the project will have on the environment. Once the study is complete, the permit may be approved, denied outright or approved with the understanding that certain conditions will be met.

### Certification

OCRM must certify all state and federal permits for projects in the coastal counties before they can be issued. One way this is done is through the OCRM Stormwater program. In this program, OCRM looks at the stormwater and wastewater issue. We want to make sure that wastewater and stormwater from a project will not have a negative impact on creeks, rivers and marshes in the area.

Certification is also used on issues that center around freshwater wetlands or even cultural or historic importance of a site.

The interest of OCRM does not lie solely with the Regulatory Division. OCRM is also involved in other areas.

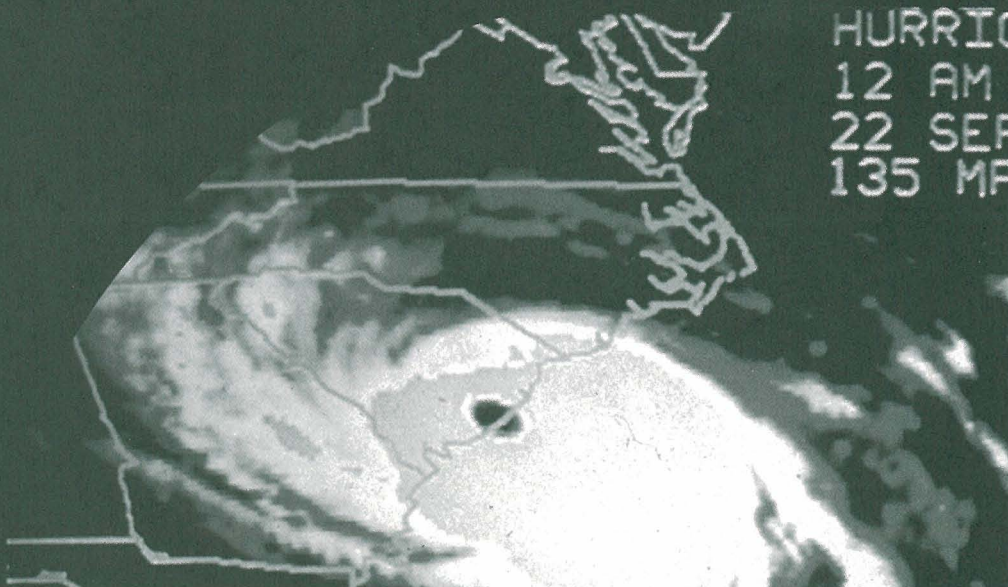
## Planning Division

Since the decisions of today will determine the coast of tomorrow, OCRM is looking toward the future and the kind of growth we will see along the way. In many respects, this is one of OCRM's most important responsibilities. OCRM's Planning Division works with communities in an effort to encourage them to grow in a way that does not endanger already scarce resources. The Division does this in the form of Special Area Management Plans (SAMP) that are tailored specially for the area in question.

## Hurricane Preparedness

The threat of a major storm is always with us. As a rule, hurricanes strike the South Carolina shores on the average of once every 12 years. These storms carry with them the potential for death and destruction on a tremendous scale. The potential for massive damage is greater now because of our increased coastal growth.

In the hopes of reducing the threat of a major storm, OCRM has joined state and local agencies in using computer simulations to determine how different storm conditions will affect different coastal areas. OCRM has also adopted a post-hurricane recovery plan that will help coordinate the tremendous push to rebuild after a storm. OCRM is also involving local governments by including recommendations on how they can reduce damage in their own communities.



## Beach and Wetland Access

With few exceptions, our beaches, wetlands and coastal waterways are yours to enjoy. Virtually all of them are held in the public trust by the State of South Carolina. OCRM is actively involved in keeping them open for your enjoyment.

Since 1977, OCRM has provided funding for over 100 public access points to our beaches, rivers and wetlands. In many cases, OCRM has been instrumental in securing state and federal funding for public access projects.

## Managed Growth

In spite of its recent years of surging growth, most of South Carolina's coast remains a place of abundant beauty and natural resources. OCRM is here to help it stay that way for years to come.

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South Carolina Department of Health  
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